

## Matter of Fact

# An Unhappy Secret

By Joseph Alsop

WASHINGTON.

An unhappy secret is worrying official Washington. The secret is that despite the American Communist party's feebleness and disarray, its agents are beginning to infiltrate certain sectors of the Negro civil rights movement.

The infiltration is spotty, as yet. But it is a very serious matter. None the less, that the charges of Communist influence, which have been hurled for so long by anti-civil rights racists, should now be acquiring some color of truth.

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, headed by the Rev. Martin Luther King jr.; the Students Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee, more usually called "SNICK," and the Congress on Racial Equality, more usually called "CORE," are all affected in greater or less degree.

These, it should be noted, are all relatively new-fledged outfits. The older, more experienced organizations of Negro civil rights fighters, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League, are quite untouched.

Both the Urban League and the NAACP learned their lesson the hard way in the late '30s and early '40s—the period which was also the high-water mark of Communist infiltration in the labor movement. Like the CIO, both these civil rights organizations expelled the Communist infiltrators, after a hard struggle but with total success.

Very recently, the NAACP staged a repeat performance with Robert Williams, who had been active in the North Carolina branch. This is the man who went to Cuba after he got his comeuppance from the NAACP, there to become a Castro propagandist.

Of the infiltrated organizations, CORE has the least serious problem. A few Commu-

nists are reported in some of the local branches, but none is known to be in CORE at the national organizational level.

In the case of SNICK, the name, Students' Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee, is in itself deceptive; for the SNICK leader, John Lewis, though not a Communist, quite frankly believes in quasi-insurrectionary tactics. Thus no great difference has been made in SNICK'S tactics because known Communists have also begun to play a certain role in SNICK.

The subject of the real head-shaking is the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King jr. His influence is very great. His original dedication to non-violence can hardly be doubted. Yet he has accepted and is almost certainly still accepting Communist collaboration and even Communist advice.

In 1962-'63, the issue of the Communists' role in the King organization was raised because of Hunter Pitts O'Dell, commonly called Jack O'Dell. This man, a known Communist, held posts in the Southern Christian Leadership Council, first in the South and then in the New York office, until the late spring of 1963. Dr. King finally dropped him when he was warned by U. S. government officials that O'Dell was the genuine Communist article.

Official warnings have again been given to Dr. King about another, even more important associate who is known to be a key figure in the covert apparatus of the Communist party. After the warnings, Dr. King broke off his open connection with this man, but a second-hand connection none the less continues. Without much doubt, this is simply a mark of Dr. King's political innocence, but it is disturbing all the same. The King organization and Dr. King himself are clearly the prime Communist targets.

Such, then, are the facts. What ought to be made of the facts is the almost precise opposite of the kind of thing the anti-civil rights racists will say about them. For despite these facts, the Negro civil rights movement is most emphatically not "run by Communists" or "inspired by Communists."

Instead, the newer and more inexperienced Negro civil rights organizations have at length proved vulnerable to Communist infiltration. But they have been vulnerable precisely because the grievance for which they seek redress is so shocking and therefore so emotionally obsessive.

Every man must bear the responsibility for his own acts. Yet in this case, a heavy burden of responsibility, a vast share of the guilt, must also be charged to the white majority, which has created the grievance by injustice to the Negro minority.

The facts cited indeed constitute a strong argument for the earliest possible passage of a strong civil rights bill, and for other measures, too, that are needed to redress the Negro grievance. These facts are further proof that time is rapidly running out. Justice must be swiftly done; or gross injustice, complacently persisted in, will breed an incurable cancer in the bosom of American society.